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**Government of the District of Columbia**



**Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs**

Testimony of

**Patrick J. Canavan**

Director

***Bill- 16-791, “Office of the Tenant Advocate  
Clarification Act of 2006”***

Committee on the Consumer and Regulatory Affairs  
Honorable Jim Graham, Chair  
Council of the District of Columbia

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Room 500  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004  
12:00 p.m.

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Good morning Council Member Graham and members of the Committee on Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. I am Patrick Canavan, Director of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. I am here to present testimony regarding “Bill 16-791 Office of the Tenant Advocate Clarification Act of 2006.”

As you are well aware Councilmember Graham, the charge of the Office of the Tenant Advocate (OTA) is quite extensive. Among other things, we are to:

- Provide education and outreach to tenants and the community about laws, rules, and other policy matters involving rental housing.
- Represent the interest of tenants in legislative, executive, and judicial issues
- Advise tenants on filing complaints and petitions, including petitions in response to disputes with landlords;
- Represent tenants in court or administrative proceedings;
- Organize tenant participation in building-wide inspections;
- Manage and Administer and the Housing Assistance Fund; and

- Create, develop and implement a comprehensive tracking system for all section 501(f) actions as outlined in (Bill 16-556 “Tenant Evictions Reform Amendment Act of 2006”).

Bill 16-791 proposes to add additional duties to the OTA to provide tenants assistance in the instances where their building is being sold. While we have no specific objection to type of assistance proposed, we’re concerned, however, that the duties outlined are quite labor intensive. As the Office of the Tenant Advocate is still in the developmental stage, it will take some time to determine the extent to which additional staff and other resources will be needed in order to carry out these additional functions.

Obviously, as I realize that these building sales issues are of paramount importance to tenants in the District of Columbia, the OTA will do everything in its power to assist these individuals.

Finally, I note that the proposed legislation retains the core of the current “Offer of Sale” provision. The OTA is currently evaluating the provision to determine if revised language is needed to strengthen the rights of tenants

when their buildings are being sold. We will provide our recommendations to the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation and I am available to answer any questions you may have.